

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today the House of Representatives passed the Paycheck Fairness and Lilly Ledbetter Acts, the first major pieces of legislation passed by the House in the 111th Congress. Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31), Vice Chair of the House Democratic Caucus, voted for [delete- the] both bills.

“Fairness and equality, two bedrock American principles, have been lacking for too long in many workplaces when it comes to the difference between the paycheck a woman receives for doing the same work as a man,” Rep. Becerra said. “Despite the advances we have made toward gender equality, women still only earn about three quarters of what a man makes for the same work. For women of color the disparity is even greater.”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, on average, women only make 78 cents for every dollar earned by a man for the same work. Women of color earn even less; an African-American woman takes home only 63 cents and a Latina only 52 cents for each dollar earned by a white male. Such gaps persist across a wide spectrum of occupations, through every level of education, and in every state of the country.

“With today’s vote we begin to close the loopholes that have allowed employers to avoid their responsibility to provide equal pay for equal work—regardless of gender, race, or other immaterial facet of identity,” Rep. Becerra said.

The Paycheck Fairness Act will strengthen the Equal Pay Act by giving women the same access to recover back pay and damages as victims of other types of discrimination. The bill does not allow courts to accept poor excuses for unfair pay practices, and it protects employees who discuss pay information from retaliation by their employer.

The Lilly Ledbetter Act restores the intent of the Equal Pay Act by removing a loophole that allowed employers to run out the clock on discriminatory pay cases by hiding pay information until it is too late for employees to take legal action.

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